

# DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



## Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

Much has been written and discussed about today's instantaneous society. We are used to receiving what we want, when we want it. The internet, WhatsApp, video calls across the globe, and even the ability to microwave frozen food have made it challenging for people, especially the younger generation that grew up with these technologies, to be patient.

We are also living in a generation in which it is very challenging for most people to daven with the kavanah that they would want to daven with, and I think these two elements are interconnected. I remember that when I first made Aliyah as a child, we would send aérograms to my grandmother in America. From the time we sent her a message until we received her reply, it would be 6-7 weeks, and that was normal. Most children these days cannot comprehend that.

Even in the realm of emails and cell phones, so much has changed. Remember how impressive it was to receive emails

when we opened our first email accounts, but even then most people did not respond right away. Then, the invention of the Blackberry changed the email dynamic. I was one of the first people I knew to have a Blackberry in Canada, and because of it I would typically respond to emails within a few minutes of receiving them. People were flabbergasted with how I was always responding so quickly, but it was so easy. Now, I know people that start to worry when their friends and relatives don't respond to a whatsApp within half an hour.

Like most things in life, technology has its advantages and disadvantages, and this article is not the place to debate them. But, I would like us to reflect together for a moment on the major difference between this instantaneous way of communication and tefilah with the Ribono Shel Olam.

The Jewish people are an *Am HaNetzach* (everlasting nation). Our relationship with Hashem demands commitment, devotion, and consistency in making time for davening and going to shul (or outdoor minyanim during Covid-19). Someone who goes to minyan three times a day is averaging at least an hour and ten minutes in shul a day. Yet, if we are being honest, it is very challenging for most of us to focus on the words and kavanah of the tefilot for this amount of time.

I'd like to share an experience that helped

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me transform my tefila over the past decade. I was invited by Rav Shmuel Eliyahu Shlit"a, Chief Rabbi of Tzfat and the son of my former Rav the Chief Rabbi of Israel Rav Mordechai Eliyahu z"tl for a festive davening in Ma'arat Hamachpela on Sukkot. Some of my sons and I woke up at 4 am, took our 4 minim, packed the car, and drove to Chevron. Davening started at 5:30 am and ended at 9 am, yes that's right, 3.5 hours.

I'm sure some of you are thinking, "I could never attend such a long davening," but the truth is it was one of the best tefilot I have ever had in my life. What made it so incredible was the fact that nobody was rushing, and everybody was there to dedicate their time, thoughts, and hearts to make the daveing an incredible experience. There was ample time to think about each and every word and to fully appreciate how lucky we are to be able to daven in the same place that Avraham Avinu bought for his dear and precious wife Sarah Imeinu.

Since that day, my family and I try to attend festive tefilot as often as we can, and we try to be the ba'alei tefilah on days such as Rosh Chodesh and the Chagim in order to sing the entire Hallel out loud and get the shul excited about how much we have to be thankful for.

Five years ago, OU Israel started two very special events which have become tradition - Yom Ha'atzmaut Tefilah Chagigit at the First Train Station and Yom Yerushalayim Tefilah Chagigit at the Tayelet overlooking Har HaBayit. This Yom Yerushalayim, we had 600 people come together for an



incredibly uplifting Tefilah (we would have had much more if we weren't limited by the police). Rabbi Shlomo Katz led an uplifting Tefilah, and the Mayor of Yerushalayim Hon. Moshe Leon addressed us with his

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moving words. Hon. Deputy Mayor Arieh King helped plan this beautiful event and joined as well. Hundreds of my OU Israel family davening from the place where we see where we really want to pray from helped uplift the davening.

There's something about dancing with hundreds or thousands of people in a public place like the First Train Station or overlooking the Old City. On Yom Yerushalayim, we stood at the same place that Avraham Avinu stood looking at Har HaMoriah for the first time. Looking at the Old City, I visualized our IDF soldiers running through the Old City, standing on Har HaBayit and announcing "Har HaBayit BeYadeinu" (the Temple Mount is in our hands) over the walkie talkie.

While it can be challenging, I try my best to treasure these special moments with Hashem, knowing that sometimes He'll answer me immediately, other times it may take a few decades, and other times it may even take several millennia. No prayer goes unanswered, and I know that the prayers of Jews going back as far as our forefathers and foremothers is what is allowing us to experience the miracles we are experiencing today. The secret is to be patient and to open our eyes to see how

lucky we really are.

I pray that next year we don't have a Tefilah Chagigat at the Tayelet; rather we should all meet at the Beit HaMikdash.

P.S. It is an absolute honor to welcome Rabbi Moshe Hauer, Executive Vice President of the OU to Israel on his first visit since taking on his new position.



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The OU Israel family is honored and delighted to welcome **Rabbi Moshe Hauer, Executive Vice President of the OU** for his first visit to Israel since assuming this leadership role a year ago. We look forward to you having and productive and successful trip.

## HAVE YOUR PHOTO APPEAR ON THE COVER OF TORAH TIDBITS

**Parshat Shelach:** Share a scene that captures the beauty of Eretz Yisrael. Please submit by May 27.

Please send your high resolution photo to [aarong@ouisrael.org](mailto:aarong@ouisrael.org)

(Image will be cropped to this size: 13.8X18.2 cm, 300 dpi)

*We are looking forward to seeing your amazing shots!*

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